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FROM : Amembassy ATHENS

Date: 25 Nov 1960 Reviewer: 059485

SUBJECT : Evaluation of NIS Program

REF : CA-6275

A meeting was held with representatives of the Embassy, CAS and the three Service Attaches in order to obtain coordinated views concerning the value of NIS reports. It was the consensus of this group that these reports serve a very useful purpose by providing a complete set of basic data available in one place and in a very effectively standardized form. Furthermore, the group agreed that the principle of gathering all basic intelligence together on a particular country, and on a continuing basis against the contingency of an emergency situation is still as sound as it was when the program was devised to fill a recognized need after World War II.

More specifically, it was agreed that the NIS reports form a handy source for purposes of briefing newly assigned personnel. Furthermore, the NIS reports were also considered of value as general background reference material. On the other hand, it was found that Political and Economic officers particularly used the sections of the NIS which described subjects such as institutional matters, i.e., the form of the constitution, the set-up of the judiciary, etc., rather than the sections which were more ephemeral by nature. In other words, chapters which in certain cases were out of date by four or five years reflecting the positions of individual party leaders or even parties themselves were often outdated and not to be relied upon. Furthermore, it was recognized that within a country like Greece there was more up-to-date source material available on the subject (not to mention in certain cases the authors or editors of the section concerned). Having these resources at hand made the NIS report itself of less value.

~~See Reverse for Review Action~~

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Drafted by:

POL/MKMitchell/HDBrewster:wc

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Athens

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Insofar as the use of the NIS in critical situations was concerned, it was agreed that having an up-to-date NIS on neighboring countries, when such a situation arose in those countries, would be extremely helpful; however, if an emergency situation arose in Greece it was generally considered unlikely that the NIS would be consulted under those conditions.

One general observation which was made is that views concerning the usefulness of the NIS program as it related to Greece did not necessarily apply to other countries, particularly Iron Curtain countries. In Greece there was no lack of basic information available by virtue of the close relations between the United States and Greece and the number of American official representatives in the country. It was more a question of winnowing out information and evaluating information rather than collecting it. It is in this light that the observation is reinforced that NIS sections such as "Political Dynamics" or sections on the economy of Greece (which are as a rule outdated by 18 months or more) are of less value than the briefs, the chapter summaries, and the basic studies of the country's institutions.

There was a split view with regard to the necessity of having NIS country studies prepared in depth. Whereas the representatives of the Embassy sections felt that this complete work was useful provided the necessary staffing was available in Washington, the representatives of the CAS, and the Attaches who have interests in areas outside the host country, felt these studies in depth were of greater value and met a real need. The Attaches noted that each of the Services prepares a semi-annual report on all matters of specific interest to their service and that these voluminous and up-to-date reports are available in Washington. In most cases officers of the three Services go to these basic documents for most information rather than to the NIS report.

As to the question of whether a coordinated inter-departmental program of the NIS provides advantages over individual departmental studies, it was the opinion of this group that a coordinated operation with more resources available to it could provide a document with greater balance and objectivity.

Finally, it was agreed that the key to the usefulness of the NIS reports was the question of whether the chapters were up to date. The briefs were considered excellent and if personnel shortages in Washington dictated setting priorities, it was agreed that primary attention should be focused on preparing and up-dating the briefs. Next in importance it was thought was the preparation of basic studies on the sections which dealt with permanent institutions such as, for example, the structure of the Government.

For the Ambassador:

H. Daniel Brewster
H. Daniel Brewster
Counselor of Embassy
for Political Affairs

Cleared in draft: Attaches, CSA

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